



# Your Congressman Reports

## Danny K. Davis

*Representative in Congress  
December 2011 – 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District – Illinois*

**To reach my office: 773-533-7520    [www.davis.house.gov](http://www.davis.house.gov)**

**T**he Congressional office was forced to move this summer as our old location on Arthington Street was being converted to other purposes by the owners. My new office is located at 2746 West Madison Street, Chicago, Illinois. The old suburban office in Broadview has been consolidated into that location as well. The Chicago phone number remains the same: 773-533-7520 and the Washington phone number also remains the same: 202-225-5006. Your communications, your input, your concerns and your ideas are always welcome in my office so please keep calling and visiting.

2011 has not been a good year for our government or our government institutions as our economy continues to struggle with high unemployment and scarce resources while the Congress finds it difficult to agree on policy initiatives to address the economic crisis. Many of our citizens have, with some justification, expressed their frustration with the very significant divisions and lack of action in the Congress as well as in our financial, economic and political institutions.

We know that the Postal system is facing tough times, that college and university tuition is going up, that money is difficult to access for investment and millions of Americans are trying to figure out which way to turn. I, and many of my colleagues in the caucuses which I belong to in the Congress, continue to put forward public policy initiatives to address the problems which confront us as a nation and I, with the assistance of my staff, have continued the commitment to being fully interactive with constituents, providing services, convening Townhall meetings and policy discussions and providing as much public information as possible. Hopefully this newsletter will assist with that effort. Please use my website: [www.davis.house.gov](http://www.davis.house.gov) and make use of my regular radio and TV call in shows: Sundays 10 - 12 p.m. on WRLL radio, call in number 773-591-6777; Fridays 1 - 2 p.m. on Star Planet TV, call in numbers 773-236-8499 and 800-486-2138 and Fridays on Cable access channel 21, call in number 312-738-1060.

### **Representatives Davis and Pitts Fight to Lower Cost of Domestic Sugar**

Representatives Danny K. Davis (D-IL) and Joe Pitts (R-PA) recently highlighted a new report from Promar International demonstrates that federal sugar policy costs consumers an additional \$4 billion a year. Price support on sales and import quotas inflate the price of sugar in the U.S. The U.S. price of sugar is nearly double the world-wide average.

Davis and Pitts have introduced H.R. 1385, the Free Market Sugar Act, to open up the domestic sugar processing market and allow companies to compete. The two Congressman have joined with Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Mark Kirk (R-IL) to form the Bi-Partisan Sugar Reform Caucus. Representative Pitts has noted, "This report confirms what we have known for a long time: the federal sugar program costs Americans billions of dollars. We are losing thousands of jobs in communities throughout the United States. The sugar program hurts American food businesses facing stiff competition from overseas. While the profits of the sugar industry are guaranteed, sugar users struggle through the economic downturn. It's time for the federal government to stop playing favorites."

Davis, who has been a leader in the sugar reform effort for years, stated, "The Congress needs to address this inadequate sugar policy that unnecessarily increases the price of sugar and creates a disadvantage for food processors, bakeries, and manufacturers. Chicago is home to several of these confectioners and Chicagoans have felt the devastating effects of this flawed policy with the loss of thousands of jobs. This report should be taken seriously and should move the Congress to act. I am committed to working with Representative Pitts to save jobs by ending the current unfair sugar program. We need sugar reform and we need it now!"



**Congressman Davis discussing Social Security with Ms. Scarborough**



**Congressman Davis discussing Social Security with Ms. Darnell**

### **Why We Must Protect Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid**

Recently I had the opportunity to meet with seniors at the Jackson Square Nursing Home in Chicago, Illinois to discuss senior issues and especially to explore with them their concerns about Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security. Three of the residents at the meeting had extensive experience with these issues as they were each over 100 years old. All three were present, engaged in the discussion, in good spirits and in good health. They were Ms. Ghema Darnell, age 103, Ms. Dottie Lee Turner, age 102, and Ms. Grace Scarborough, age 102. Several of their family members were present and all of us had a great deal to discuss.

It occurred to me while there, that in all likelihood, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid were all present in the room also because without them the many of the residents would likely not have had the opportunity for a long and vigorous life. Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid have so completely changed the lives of seniors it is hard for us to remember back to the days before Medicare, much less Social Security. Without these critical programs many of our seniors would be without the basic necessities of life including shelter and health care.

Jackson Square provides a great service to the community and thanks must certainly go out to Ms. Princess Brown for making the facility available so that I could visit the residents and in particular with these three remarkable ladies and see our government working at its best. A special thanks to Ms. Darnell, Ms. Turner and Ms. Scarborough for taking the time to share some of their experiences and thoughts with me.



**Congressman Davis discussing Social Security with Ms. Turner and Ms. Brown**

### **Davis Salutes the Child Welfare Community as We Celebrate Adoption Month**



**Congressman Davis meeting with Ms. McNaulty, Alexis, Kenneth and Ms. Annetta Wilson to discuss grandparents with primary responsibility for raising their grandchildren**

As we celebrate adoption month and as we focus on the need for parents to step into the lives of 2,944 children in foster care in Illinois waiting to be adopted, I take this opportunity to salute the child welfare community in Illinois and throughout the nation.

An outstanding child welfare leader in the 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District is Ms. Linda McNaulty. Ms. McNaulty is grandmother to two lovely grandchildren whom she has raised from infancy: ten year old Alexis and seven year old Kenneth. The three of them reside at Sankofa House, a supportive community for grandparents raising grandchildren on the Westside of Chicago, Illinois in the North Lawndale community.

Sankofa House was founded by Ms. Annetta Wilson, who still directs the institution and who also serves as President of the Sankofa Safe Child Initiative. Without her, it is doubtful there would be a Sankofa House. Ms. Wilson is a creative and energetic social worker who makes use of every opportunity to help improve the lives of others. She is chairperson of the 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District Advisory Committee on Child Welfare which advises my activities in the District as well as activities of the Congressional Black Caucus' Child Welfare Braintrust.

Also providing outstanding leadership in the 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District child welfare community is the One Church, One Family Organization, which is chaired by Rev. Dr. Walter Bauldrich, an African Methodist Episcopal Church Presiding Elder. One Church, One Family is managed by Ms. Reanetta Hunt and her son Christopher Hunt, a social worker/mentor for young boys with whom they work in the Illinois Department of Corrections. The One Church, One Family program is an advocacy and training group composed principally of ministers who try to prepare and motivate their parishioners to become foster parents to youth who are, or have been, incarcerated and are in need of permanent homes. This is obviously a more difficult group of young people to work with and find placement for. They deserve special recognition for the roles they play in the lives of our children.

### **Davis Stands Up for Voting Rights**

Congressman Danny K. Davis has once again reiterated his unyielding support for efforts to protect voting rights and to make voting easier and more secure.

Across the country state legislatures and many federal legislators are introducing measures and supporting efforts to make voting more restrictive and more difficult. Davis is a co-sponsor and a proud supporter of legislation to open up the process and make voting easier: the Easy Voting Act, H.R. 3163. The Easy Voting Act of 2011 amends the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to: (1) require a minimum early voting period of 14 days preceding a federal election for states offering early voting, (2) prohibit an election official from requiring an individual to provide a state-based identification as a condition of registering to vote or of receiving or casting a ballot in any federal election, and (3) require states to make same-day voter registration and change of address service available at the polling place on the date of election.

### **Fairness for Private Student Loans**

On May 26, 2011, I became an original co-sponsor of H.R.2028, the Private Student Loan Bankruptcy Fairness Act, joining lead sponsor Representative Steve Cohen (D-TN) in moving to restore fairness in student lending by treating privately-issued student loans in bankruptcy the same as other types of private debt - as dischargeable in bankruptcy. For the past decade, private student loans have been the fastest growing and most profitable part of the student loan industry. The interest rates and fees on private loans can be as onerous as credit cards and can place a tremendous burden on student borrowers with private loans. Unlike federal student loans, there is no government-imposed loan limit on private loans and no public regulation over the terms and cost of these loans. The 2005 bankruptcy law restrictions penalize borrowers for pursuing higher education and provide no incentive to private lenders to lend responsibly. Private education debt is no different than other consumer debt – in involves private profit and deserves no privileged treatment.

### **Davis Opposes Balanced Budget Amendment**

The Balanced Budget Amendment (H.J. Res. 2) to the Constitution represents bad economics, bad public policy and bad constitutional law. The ability to borrow to help our states and citizens is a critical tool to aid our nation during times of economic crisis or threats to our national security.



One of the most egregious consequences of this bill are the dangerous cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid and other safety net programs that would result. This legislation attempts to balance the current deficit on the backs of the elderly, the poor, the disabled and our veterans despite the fact that the immediate causes of the deficit are the reckless tax cuts for the wealthy and the bursting of the housing bubble created by the manipulations of some of our nations largest financial institutions. To achieve balance in the short term, massive reductions to critical safety net programs would have to occur: \$750 billion in cuts to Medicare, \$1.2 trillion from Social Security, and \$85 from veterans’ benefits through 2021. Dramatic and painful cuts to other safety net protections for citizens such food stamps and Supplemental Security Income would almost certainly occur as well. To add insult to injury, nonpartisan economists with Macroeconomic Advisors estimate that a Balanced Budget Amendment would eliminate 15 million jobs, increase unemployment to 18 percent and shrink the economy by 17 percent – catastrophic economic losses at the same time that federal safety programs to support citizens experiencing such hardship are being eviscerated.

With poverty at the highest level since estimates have been published, H.J. Res. 2 represents a war on the poor. The mantle of responsibility to protect our most vulnerable citizens should rest with government not on charity of individual citizens. As your Representative, I vehemently oppose this legislation that would take so much from so many so that the most affluent few could reap so much and have voted accordingly.



Congressman Davis speaking with young constituents about a career in health care

**Davis, Quigley Say NO to Cuts in Children’s Hospitals Graduate Medical Education Program**

On May 5, 2011 Representatives Danny K. Davis (D-IL) and Mike Quigley (D-IL) wrote to President Obama expressing their deep concerns about the total elimination of funding for Children’s Hospitals in the President’s 2012 budget. They pointed out that in 2010 Congress appropriated \$318 million for the CHGME Payment Program which provides a general subsidy for 56 freestanding children’s hospitals through a statutory formula. This program was created to address the disparity in Federal support for Graduate Medical Education between freestanding children’s hospitals and other teaching hospitals supported by Medicare. They pointed out that termination of the program would be a major step backwards for children’s health and the future adequacy of the pediatric workforce.

CHGME is critically important; not only does it allow the children’s hospitals to continue their significant commitment to training children’s doctors, it also allows them to continue to provide a broad range of clinical services to all children, including a growing percentage of children covered by Medicaid.

**Davis Supports Abolition of the Death Penalty**

On February, 11, 2011, Congressman Davis sent the following letter to Governor Pat Quinn in favor of abolishing the death penalty:

Dear Governor Quinn:

I write to thank you for your service and your efforts to advance the quality of life for all people in Illinois, including minorities, the underprivileged and the disadvantaged.

As a Representative and as a member of a minority group, I understand how difficult it sometimes is to speak and act for the disadvantaged and often powerless individuals in our society. I applaud your courage and the courage and conviction of the members of the Illinois General Assembly, to reconsider the morality, integrity and feasibility of the death penalty in Illinois, just as many reconsidered the morality of segregation at the height of the civil rights movement.

I believe it is important to speak up when basic human rights are being violated, and write to express my support for, and ask that you sign, the legislation abolishing the death penalty in Illinois.

Sincerely,

Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress  
7<sup>th</sup> District of Illinois

## To Help Us Help You

My office receives many requests from constituents requesting White House tours. Following is some information which may be helpful in expediting your requests: **1)** Public tours of the White House are scheduled Tuesday through Saturday from 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. for groups of ten or more persons. **2)** All guests, 14 years of age or older, are required to submit their name, date of birth, social security number and country of citizenship to the requesting office. Tour guests under age 14 only need to submit their name and date of birth. **3)** All requests should be made at least five days before the tour date; my office recommends at least two weeks ahead of the tour date to ensure your request can be accommodated. **4)** For help on White House tours please call Dante Pope in my office at 202-225-5006.

### Cost-of-Living Adjustment Means Social Security and SSI Benefits for More than 60 Million Americans Will Increase 3.6% in 2012 – and That’s 100% Good News



Monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for more than 60 million Americans will increase 3.6% in 2012. The 3.6% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will begin with benefits that nearly 55 million Social Security beneficiaries receive in January 2012. Increased payments to more than 8 million SSI beneficiaries will begin on December 30, 2011. The purpose of the COLA is to ensure that the purchasing power of Social Security and SSI is not eroded by inflation.

There was no cost-of-living increase in 2010 and 2011 because the consumer price index used to determine COLAs did not increase above the level of the third quarter of 2008, the last year a COLA was determined. COLAs have been automatic (that is, they do not require a special vote by the Congress) since 1975.

Medicare premiums will also change. Most people (those who had 40 or more quarters of Medicare-covered employment or a spouse with 40 or more quarters of Medicare-covered employment) do not pay a monthly Part A (Hospital Insurance) premium. The standard Medicare Part B (Medical Insurance) will be \$99.90 in 2012, a \$15.50 decrease over the 2011 premium. However, most Medicare beneficiaries were held harmless in 2011 and paid \$96.40 per month so the 2012 premium represents a \$3.50 increase for them. Since 2007 the Part B premium has been based on annual income, so, if a beneficiary’s “modified adjusted gross income” is greater than \$85,000 in 2012 for those filing an individual tax return or married filing a separate return, and \$170,000 for a beneficiary filing a joint return, the beneficiary is responsible for a larger portion of the Plan B coverage. About 4% of Part B enrollees are expected to be subject to higher premium amounts.

Why is the COLA 100% good news? Because Social Security contributes nothing to the deficit. Nothing. Nada. Even if Congress does not change Social Security, the program can pay all benefits through the year 2038 with no changes whatsoever. In fact, the program will be able to pay more than 80% of scheduled benefits well into the next century. Since the value of benefits is projected to rise through time, 80% of the projected benefit in 2040 is considerably higher than the average benefit received by retirees today. Those that say Social Security will not be there for our children or grandchildren are either misinformed or dishonest. The cost of making Social Security fully solvent for as far ahead as we can look under the Social Security program (75 years) is only .58% (a little more than ½ of one percent) of our GDP. By comparison, the cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is 1.7% of GDP.

The immediate cause of our budget deficit was the bursting of the housing bubble and the tax cuts of 2001 and 2003. The way out of our current deficit problem is putting America back to work and making our tax system more fair. ***That is why Congressman Davis has stated repeatedly that he does not support and will not vote for any cuts in Social Security and for that matter, any cuts in Medicare or Medicaid.***

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*Danny K. Davis*

M.C.

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